

SUBSTITUTING FOR THE SUBSTITUTE!

By James W. Crumpton

As that fearful, memorable Wednesday morning passed toward noon, Jesus gave the third of His seven sayings on the cross. "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home"(John 19:26-27).

I am glad that there was somebody at the foot of the cross who cared. There were five who were sympathetic, bereaved, astounded, brokenhearted, and deeply concerned (four women and one man). It is a pity that there was only one man to four women. Men, mourn with me!!! In many churches today, there are four women and children, to every one man, who are faithful. Men, what a shame!!!

Mary, His mother, was there. She had suffered much because of this unique Son. Gossipers smirked at His birth, suggesting that He was an illegitimate child. (The liberal theologians still do, and the neo-orthodox and neo- evangelicals claim these theologians as their brothers. They are all traitors only in different coats.) Jesus had wisely ignored Mary when it hurt (Matthew 12:46-50). The sword was twisting in her bosom (Luke 2:35).

She was there. She loved Him and suffered much!!!

The mother of John, the beloved disciple, was there. She was Mary's (His mother's) sister. Love for her strange and wonderful nephew and her widowed sister brought her great grief and concern. She was there.

Mary the wife (now the widow) of Cleophas was there. Cleophas was the brother of Joseph, the foster father of Jesus. He loved Him. He was there.

Mary Magdalene was there. Jesus had cast seven demons out of her. She was so grateful to Him for the miracle He had performed for her. Surely, she represented all who had been blessed by His miraculous ministry. She was there.

John the disciple was there. He was the only one of the inner circle of disciples who was present. He had followed faithfully through the trials and was there regardless of the personal risk. He was there.

Here at the foot of the cross were the nearest and dearest on earth to Him. Will He notice? Will He have a word for them? Yes, He does! It is a surprising statement, probably different than any would have expected. He speaks as Lord! He issues commands as a King on His throne. On Calvary, Jesus was not helplessly surrendering to the inevitable. He was the General marching through the battle to victory!!!

"...Woman, behold thy son...Behold thy mother..." In this saying, He makes three assignments: the assignment for His mother, the assignment for John, His beloved disciple, and the assignment for Himself.

THE ASSIGNMENT FOR HIS MOTHER

What is His Word for her? Is she given a special, unique place of exaltation? The Roman Catholic Church insists that she was given the position of mediatrix, entrusted with treasures of His grace, and given the responsibility of distributing His bounty. They call her the "Queen of Heaven," the "Mother of God," and a score of other high sounding titles.

The Bible knows nothing of such a teaching. Jesus was careful to guard future generations from the heresy of Mariolatry.

Jesus, in the Scriptures, is never recorded as calling her "mother." He always called her "woman." However, He used the word "woman" with all tenderness, respect, and honor. Why did He not call her "mother?" Well, Jesus was no mere Palestinian peasant. He was Almighty God incarnated in human flesh. He knew that thousands would go to Hell because of the heresy of Mariolatry, and He would lend no support to this heresy. And it is happening before our very eyes. Mary is no mediatrix between God and man.

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"(1 Timothy 2:5).

The Protestants say that Jesus was making loving provision for His mother, as she is being assigned a place to live. In other words, they say that Jesus was, figuratively speaking, pinning the first Mother's Day red rose to the cross. Neither is this correct! We cannot accept this or the Catholic version.

What was He doing? What was He saying? It has to do with their relationship. How could a woman who had a depraved nature give birth to a Son Who had no depraved nature? And that is exactly what had happened! The blood of a child comes through the seed of the father. The flesh of the child comes through the mother. Jesus had no human father; so, His was blood with no depravity. His human flesh came through Mary. It was divine blood that flowed through His veins. The heresy of the Immaculate Conception seeks to explain the virgin birth by saying that Mary was born without a depraved nature. This is good logic, but it is not true! I agree with the good old Southern black preacher who said: "It just ain't so!" Amen and amen!!! Mary gave Jesus a physical body and that was all. He was saying that their relationship as mother and Son ceased that day. "A sword twisted in her heart." Tradition says that she fainted, and I doubt it not.

It was not that Jesus did not love her. He loved her more than you and I love our mothers. Our love for our mothers is diluted and polluted with human depravity. His love for His mother was perfect natural affection; He had no depravity!!!

To Mary, this was devastating. But He was suffering a million times more in the assignment than she. If you have any tears, do not waste them on Mary. She found out that it was far more wonderful to be the daughter of the Christ than the mother of the human Jesus. She said so in her magnificat (Luke 1:46-56). Did she call Him her son? No, she called Him her Saviour, Lord, and God!!! Amen and amen!!! Now, let us take note of--

THE ASSIGNMENT FOR HIS DISCIPLE

John speaks of himself as being "the disciple whom Jesus loved." My, in this strata of society are the spiritual four hundred, the upper ten!!! That would be better than having a write-up with your picture in all of the denominational and independent papers! I do not believe that this is supposed to cause us to feel that Jesus loved John more than He loved the other disciples. I believe that John had a greater capacity for appreciating and appropriating His love than did some of the others.

"...Behold, thy mother..." It is an assignment for John to substitute in the responsibilities of our Lord that had to do with the flesh. The Word makes it clear that John took Mary to his own home.

Jesus was on the cross dying a substitutionary death for sinners, fulfilling all of the types in the Levitical system. Hallelujah, what a Saviour! Ah, was not our Lord saying, "John, I am dying as your SUBSTITUTE that your sins may be forgiven; now, you go and be my substitute here! Take care of my mother--make her your mother!" John's assignment was to be the substitute for The SUBSTITUTE!!!

Is not this the assignment for all of us who are born again, blood washed believers? We are to substitute for Him here, since He was our SUBSTITUTE at Calvary!!! We are to win the lost and feed the lambs. We are to bring the lost to Christ and disciple them for Him. The poet put it this way:

"Christ has no hands but our hands
To do His work today
He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in His way
He has no tongue but our tongues
To tell men how He died,
He has no help but our help
To bring them to His side!"

For us to ignore this privilege and responsibility is to despise the cross. Because of His love displayed at the cross, it is our privilege and assignment to substitute for The SUBSTITUTE!!!

Certainly, our Lord purposes this for every blood-washed, born again believer. Oh that we will be faithful substitutes for the SUBSTITUTE!!!

In making these assignments for His mother and His beloved disciple, He automatically made

AN ASSIGNMENT FOR HIMSELF

Yes, He, too, is assuming an assignment! We must never forget that Jesus (not Mary, not John, not the penitent thief, not the crucifying crowd) was the central figure in this gruesome scene. Folk who make Mary the central theme are giving us Romanism, not Christianity! Jesus was supreme at Mount Calvary!!! Jesus is supreme today!!!

What was He doing in these assignments? This assignment for Himself? One of the least things we can say is that He was showing interest in fulfilling the last detail of the law. Moses had said, "Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother." This, certainly, includes seeing about their food, clothes, and shelter. He, thus, instructs John to do just that. He was careful to avoid even the smell of the fires of sin upon His garments. Oh, that men and women today would thus honor their fathers and mothers!

This is the least that we can say of the significance of the third word for Himself, but it is not the last or the most important. The most significant thing in this assignment for Himself is that it is the clearest, most easily understood demonstration of self-renunciation to be found in the New Testament. By this word, He cut Himself off from mother-love. He forsook the best earth had to offer. He renounced every tie that would interfere with His Saviourhood. He cut Himself from all filial relationships. He gave up all for sinners like you and me. This was self-renunciation that has never been demonstrated except at the cross. Yes, the third word twisted a sword in Mary's bosom. But her pain was nothing when compared to the agony of His sensitive heart. He was sacrificing to save these treasures from the fires of Hell.

HOW COULD WE ILLUSTRATE IT?

Human illustrations fall so short in the face of these infinite sufferings. I will give two human illustrations. If you will stand at the climax of these illustrations and picture sufferings (because of the cutting off of filial relationships) a billion times more intense, you may have a small conception of His suffering.

The story of Perpetua, a young widow of twenty six, with an infant at her breast, is found in Fox's Book of Martyrs. Her husband had already died for his testimony for the Saviour. Her father was an unbeliever who tried to persuade her to make some offerings to the Roman gods and avoid dying by being gored to death by the wild bulls at Carthage. In fact, her father tried to carry her bodily from her cell, but was knocked out by a staggering blow from one of the prison guards.

Perpetua was hurt worse by the blow than her own martyrdom and was glad that her father came to consciousness before she was marched into the arena to die. She placed her little girl in the arms of her father, kissed them, and walked out to die for her

testimony for our Lord Jesus Christ. She was cut off from all filial relationships for her Lord. But her suffering was minor beside that of our Lord as He said, "...Woman, behold thy son." He cut Himself off from mother-love to go to Hell for all of us!!!

We are told of a preacher who lived many hundreds of years ago and who was in love with a sweet, beautiful, and noble woman. They were planning marriage and hoping for children. But God revealed that this was not His will. The man's service to Christ was to be in such a capacity as to have to forego the privilege of having a wife and children. The man of God struggled in prayer to become willing for such a sacrifice. One bright, moonlit night, when the ground was covered with snow, he went out and fashioned of the snow an image of his beloved and still other images of children he had dreamed would be theirs as a result of their union. He fashioned it all as a family circle around the hearth in an imagined living room, sat down, and enjoyed it all for one delicious hour in his imagination. Then, he kissed them all farewell to go to do the Father's will for his life. He gave up all filial relationships to do the will of our Lord Jesus Christ. But this suffering was not a billionth as intense as the suffering our Lord faced in saying, "...Woman, behold thy son...Behold thy mother..." All illustrations would fail to display the depths of sacrifice to which our Saviour voluntarily, sank when He gave up all to make effective our eternal salvation.

WHAT ARE THE APPLICATIONS TO BE MADE OF THIS GREAT TEXT?

The first one is that there is no hope of salvation except in the Saviourhood of Jesus. It is in Him and Him alone!!! The second one is that there is no usefulness except in the Lordship of Jesus. Do not feel sorry for those who permit Him to be Lord in their lives; they are enjoying billion-dollar diamonds while you play with tawdry ten-cent store tinsel. The third application is that joy unspeakable and full of glory is ours when He is truly Lord of our lives. Amen and amen!!!

The story is told of an evangelist, of another generation, who lived in Chicago. He and his wife had only one daughter. At the time of the experience, which I am about to relate, this little girl was almost 10 years of age. She was beautiful and had long, blond, curly hair.

For several years, since she had been large enough, she had met her dad at the door when he came in from his office and/or special meetings. She would have his house shoes and bath robe in the living room, along with a cold coke or lemonade. When he was comfortably seated, she would crawl into his lap and smother him with hugs and kisses saying, "I love you more than anything or anybody!"

One day this dad decided to put his little daughter's love to a test. After having enjoyed his welcome home, with all the usual niceties, and while she was hugging and kissing him, declaring that she loved him more than anything or anybody, he interrupted her and told her that he wanted her to give him her little necklace. It had cost ten cents at the local five and dime store (it might cost \$3.85 today, with inflation!). She looked puzzled and asked him what he would do with it? He answered by saying that he wanted to burn it in

the fireplace, and that if she really loved him more than anything or anybody that she would not mind. She reaffirmed her love for him but refused to give up the necklace. She left him, went into the kitchen, and told her mother that he wanted to burn her necklace and that she liked it very much and believed that he was acting crazy.

For the next three days, when dad came home, she met him with less enthusiasm and less favors.

Each day, he told her that he wanted her to give him her necklace, that if she loved him more than anything or anybody, why should she care? After three days, with her decreasing enthusiasm and favors, she did not welcome him home, show any favors, or express any love for 18 long days--that made three full weeks, since her dad had originally made the request.

Then, the next afternoon, when he came in, she met him with all of her favors and smothered him again with hugs and kisses, saying that she loved him more than anything or anybody, and saying that he could have her necklace and burn it. She cried a little when she gave it to him but insisted that she really wanted him to have it. Then, while they watched it burn she cried a little more but assured him, again, that she wanted him to do it because she did love him more than she loved anything or anybody. This certainly included the cheap little necklace!

When the necklace was burned and gone, her dad went to the closet where his coat was hanging. He took a little box out of the pocket and began to open it for her. In great excitement, with tear-stained face, she was saying, "Daddy, what is it?" He said, "Sweetheart, it is a string of genuine pearls for you. I paid hundreds of dollars for it." "Oh," she said, "Daddy, how long have you had these pearls?" His reply was, "My dear, I have had them for three weeks." Then, she said, "But Daddy, why didn't you tell me?" He said lovingly, "Sweetheart, I would not tell you, or give them to you, until you were willing to give up the cheap little necklace you had!"

Beloved, are we not guilty of holding on to cheap, tawdry tinsel when He wants to give us billion-dollar diamonds? But it can happen only after we yield to Him as Lord. Then comes the joy unspeakable and full of glory!
Amen and amen!!!!